4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Burusho AV7

the story is true. It needs a mountaineer properly equipped to make use of this road, which runs over one of the greatest glacier masses of the world, as Sir Martin Conway shows in his book, "Climbing and Exploration in the Karakoram Himalayas." Dependent therefore on Gilgit for their luxuries, such as weapons, cotton cloth, salt, sugar, etc., most of them the produce of India, or on Hunza for the products of Turkestan and Central Asia, the Nagar people were more easily squeezable than their neighbours across the water, and not so aggressively insolent in their dealings with Kashmir. They were as little to be trusted, however. It was one of their chiefs who many years ago called in the Kashmir arms to help him break his rival Thum, and who, once the Kashmiris were well within the country, fraternised with his enemy, and turned upon his late allies; and Nagar forces had played a prominent part in the disturbances of the past year. The want of dash on the part of the Nagar warriors was well marked on the former occasion; no badly-disciplined army, abandoned by its chiefs as were the Kashmir forces in the former case, should have been able to escape. Pathans would have wiped them out to a man, even Chitralis would have inflicted terrible loss, but the Nagar men allowed their enemies to get out of the country scathless, and even to save, owing to the gallantry of one officer, their small mountain guns carried by coolies. These were points which were worth considering and laying up for future guidance.

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Burusho AV7

bone of the force, four hundred Gurkhas and Dogras of the Kashmir Body Guard Regiment, two hundred and fifty Dogras of the Kashmir Ragu Pertab Regiment, a hundred and fifty Punyali levies, and a small detachment of twenty men of the 20th Punjab Infantry, my personal escort, half with a gatling gun and half attached to the Punyalis to stiffen them, and the seven-pounders of the Hazara mountain battery. A larger force could not have been fed in the country, a smaller could not have undertaken the job. Opposed to us I counted on finding some four or five thousand men indifferently armed, but very skilful and dangerous enemies behind stone walls.

Our advance was unopposed, but the path had been cut away in places, and the march was slightly delayed, so that it was about midday before we crossed the last rising ground and saw Nilt and Mayun before us. Flags fluttered gaily from their walls, and a burst of cheering and the roll of drums told us we were expected. Men could be seen hurrying into the fort and entering the sungahs, stone breastworks, on the hills behind it. At the foot of the slope we were descending I halted my little army, which looked tinier than ever as the detachments closed up, and sent for the officers commanding the different bodies to explain my plan of attack.

The forts in the Hindu Kush are generally square, with towers at the corners, the solid walls, often ten to fifteen feet thick for some feet from the base, are built of stones and mud strengthened by timbers, but the towers, which are high, are more flimsy, and the loosening of a timber frame might bring them

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir Burdsall AV7

down with a run. My intention was to try the corner of a tower with my pop guns, in the hopes of bringing down the tower and giving us a point to storm; if this failed, Aylmer, with a handful of sappers covered by the Gurkhas, was to make a dash for the gate, and blow it in with gun cotton. The necessity of storming the fort at all costs was known to all. The moment the fort was ours the Body Guard Regiment, which was held in reserve, was to be pushed past it into the ravine behind to storm the defences on the far side. The fort stood at the junction with the river of a great ravine coming down from the snows of Rakapushi. The cliffs forming the ravine and river bank from which the walls rose were some three hundred feet in height.

The fort was too far off for the little guns to make the necessary accurate shooting, and every one having their orders we pushed on. The river here took a sudden bend, and we had to march round this to our right, and in doing so lost sight of the fort, which was hidden by a spur of hill. Closer and closer we moved, till we were right under the spur, which I occupied with the Punyalis; as we rounded its end the top of a tower came into view. But only a foot or so was visible, and we had to get nearer in. At last, when about ten feet of the towers and half the wall could be seen, we halted the guns and came into action. A death-like silence had prevailed, and the enemy made no sign, but as the first shell sailed over the wall and burst behind the fort a wild cheer rose from the garrison, which was caught up from point to point

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Burusho AV7

and went rolling up the valley ahead of us. We had got in closer than the officer commanding the guns, Lieutenant Gorton, R.A., thought, and the range was only two hundred and fifty yards.

Then the game began in earnest; the little guns pegged away at the corner tower and burst shells inside the fort, and the enemy opened a very heavy but ill-directed fire on us, from which we suffered but little, for they were firing down hill, and our men were fairly well under cover of the walls of the terraced fields, and the bank of a big irrigation channel. Ten minutes was enough to show Gorton and me that we were doing no good; the tower, we found out afterwards, had been built up solid to the top, and the time had come for the decisive attack. The order was given, and with a cheer a covering party of Gurkhas dashed forward, lined the last terrace wall, and opened a hot fire on the loopholes of the fort; under cover of their fire Aylmer and his storming party crossed the open and threw themselves into the ditch.

The gate of the fort was in the centre of the main wall, and was hidden from our view by a six-foot wall built on the edge of the ditch, which the enemy had loopholed but had omitted to hold. The ditch was full of abattis made of whole trees, which also stretched from it to the end of the spur above the fort. A path was found through the abattis leading to a small door which gave access to the passage between the outer and main wall; this door was under a heavy fire from the sungahs across the ravine, but it was speedily forced with the loss of one man, and once through it the

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Burusho AV7

India would be landed in serious difficulties. The Indus Valley tribes would be certain to rise, the Chitralis might join in, the whole frontier might be in a blaze, and though I knew neither Gilgit nor Bunji could possibly fall, the difficulty of feeding the troops at the front would become insuperable; added to this the passes were closed, and no help could possibly come till June. I knew I should not want troops to enable me to hold my own, but the anxiety of the authorities in India might prompt them to try and despatch them; and failure now would necessarily entail the despatch of a costly relief expedition in the spring. It was a miserable time, and nothing but the knowledge that George Robertson was political officer with the force, and that his fiery courage and stern determination would brook of no failure, kept me confident.

Day by day reports reached me from the front, and they were not very cheerful reading. Our troops occupied the captured fort of Nilt and the open ground over which we had advanced. Their water supply was assured, and there was a sufficiency of food. The enemy were unenterprising, were wedded to a passive resistance, and showed no desire to attempt the recapture of Nilt, or to work round the little force and to attack the line of communications. So far all was well; the question was, how to break through their guard?

There were the traditional three courses open. It was a case of either crossing the Hunza River and storming the fort of Mayun, or of pushing up the river bed and thus turning the enemy's position